

# NPS Libraries Come of Age

## Building the NPS "Virtual Library"

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There are nearly 400 libraries in the national park system, most of them managed by park staff without library training on a collateral duty basis. There are currently no central funding sources for backlog cataloging or preservation treatment and local budgets for library operations are minimal. The number of book titles range from 150 to 60,000 (Morristown National Historical Park), with the average size being 3,000 volumes. When non-book items are taken into account, the National Park Service (NPS) library holdings are estimated to total 5.7 million pieces; however, the majority of these are not cataloged, at least not in a standardized, electronic format. These historically persistent conditions severely impact discovery, retrieval, and sharing of a significant component of the research and educational materials constituting the NPS information base, not only within individual parks, but across organizational lines.

The NPS library collections contain a wide variety of media and formats: books (including rare and out-of-print); reports and conference proceedings (many unpublished); theses and dissertations; whole journals and journal article reprints; newspaper clippings and other ephemera (many from the 19th and early-20th centuries); oral histories; maps, charts, and plans; microfilm and audio visual materials; CDs and computer files; photocopied reproductions of historic manuscript materials; note files; species lists, etc. The comprehensive

and highly focused scopes of the NPS library collections may be considered their primary value. The following selected highlights are intended to give only a very partial view of the range and depth of materials to be found in NPS libraries.

### **C&O Canal National Historical Park.**

Associate Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas oral history tapes and related newspaper clippings.

### **Frederick Douglass National Historic Site.**

Valuable collection of books and other materials highlighting the life and career of the most notable African American of the 19th century.

**Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park.** Regiment lists and xeroxes of correspondence and other historic documents relating to the Civil War.

**Harpers Ferry Center.** An enormous photo collection covering many parks in the System and specialized book collections in material culture, NPS history, technical conservation, design, etc.

### **Independence National Historical Park.**

Notecard file of historical data relating to people, events, and sites from the park's historic period.

**Lowell National Historical Park.** Large collection of textile industry trade catalogs, technical manuals, and other reference works from the 19th and early-20th centuries.

### **Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site.**

Focused collection of books on 19th century and early-20th century art.

**San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.** Over 2,000 subject files containing Congressional reports, newspaper clippings, journal articles, obituaries, and staff research notes on maritime history.

**Yellowstone National Park.** Scrapbooks (1895-1940) containing periodical excerpts covering such topics as President Warren Harding's 1923 trip to Yellowstone and President Calvin Coolidge's trip in 1927.

*The National Park Service Union Catalog*

To promote and enhance discovery, retrieval, and sharing of NPS intellectual resources (at least, the metadata describing it), the NPS Library Program will merge NPS bibliographic records that are in electronic format to a centralized database



which is fully compliant with professional library and information standards and is deliverable via the Web. Initially, the NPS Union Catalog will be accessible via the NPS Intranet only, and will contain approximately 130,000 records from individual and regional NPS library catalogs and subsets of the NPS natural resources and cultural resources bibliographies. To advance the automated cataloging efforts in the field and further develop the NPS Union Catalog, the NPS Information & Telecommunications Center (ITC) purchased 300 copies of ProCite bibliographic software for distribution to parks. ProCite users receive the program and software upgrades, along with user aids and technical support.

Using an adjunct program called BookWherePro, parks can build library catalogs cheaply, efficiently, and professionally by obtaining free records matching their holdings from library catalogs on the Internet ("copy cataloging"). The records may be downloaded into ProCite import format. BookWherePro also enables downloading of subject and name authority records from Library of Congress databases for "original cataloging" purposes (when cataloging copy cannot be obtained). Golden Spike National Historical Park recently cataloged 960 of their library of 1,000 titles in 50 staff hours using this model. Eventually, the NPS Union Catalog will be accessible to all Internet users and may include references or links to the following NPS information base components:

- all of the library holdings in NPS parks, support offices, central offices, and service cen-

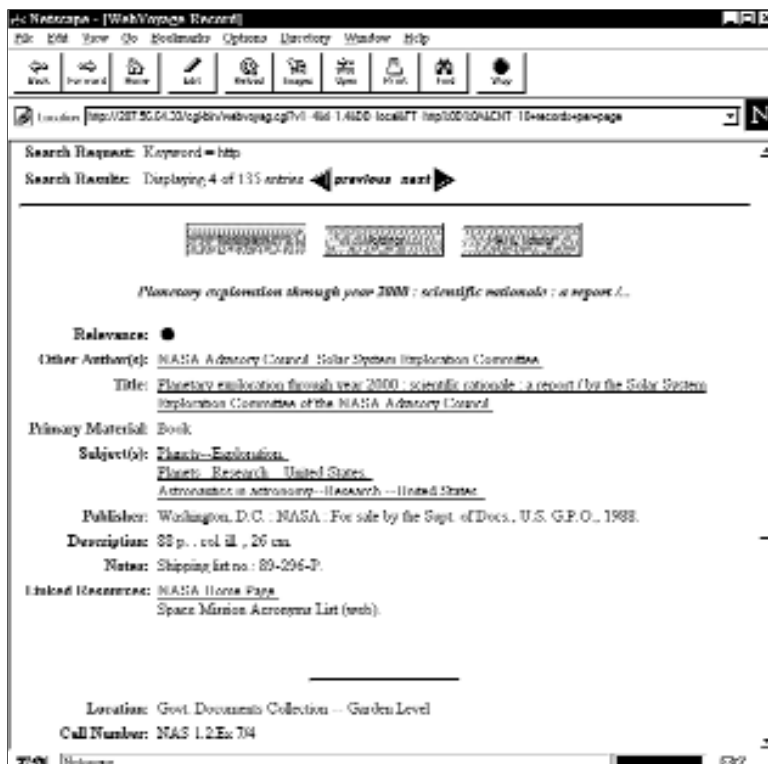
ters, including selected format subsets, e.g., trade catalogs, and oral histories;

- selected holdings in NPS museum collections, e.g., archival collections, archives finding aids, rare books, and books from the personal libraries of historical figures;
- the holdings of the NPS Denver Service Center's Technical Information Center, containing in-house plans, drawings, and planning documents;
- NPS servicewide, program area bibliographies, e.g., Natural Resources Bibliography, Cultural Resources Bibliography; Trails Bibliography, and others (built using ProCite);
- "ThemeCats" merging the references to library holdings in parks sharing similar themes/resources, e.g., African-American history, Native American history, Civil War, women's history, etc.
- books sold by the NPS book stores (i.e., cooperating associations);
- all NPS and NPS-related publications that are available for distribution upon request, including those sold through partners and friends' groups (e.g., curriculum packets and unigrid park brochures).

#### *Endeavor's Voyager OPAC*

The software that will be used to manage and search the NPS Union Catalog is Voyager, by Endeavor Information Systems, Inc. Primary access to the OPAC (online public access catalog) will be through the Web. Scoped to research and special libraries, Voyager is a state-of-the-art library software program developed by seasoned library and information industry professionals. The software design exploits to full advantage currently available technologies and standards, including Web capabilities, the Z39.50 (v.3) information storage and retrieval protocol, multi-tiered client/server architecture, distributed networking, platform-independent design, and open database connectivity. Some of its features are listed here:

- default (customizeable) buttons on Voyager's main toolbar include links to the local catalog (i.e., the NPS Union Catalog), library information, other library catalogs, non-library databases and other electronic resources, and help;
- in addition to indexed field searching (author, title, subject, call number), supports searching for keywords located anywhere in the records with user-assigned weighting of search terms and returned items ranked for relevance;
- can perform command line searching or will build searches with pulldown menus, using boolean operators in either case;
- supports searches limited by date, type, medium, language, etc., as defined by system administrator;



- leads users to broader, narrower, and related terms when performing subject searches via cross-reference structures;
- configures author, title, and subject headings as hypertext links;
- can link to described or related electronic resources from within the catalog record;
- supports searching and management of course reserve materials (a function which could be commandeered to deliver NPS digital documents);
- can perform simultaneous searching of multiple library catalogs on the Internet, along with the NPS Union Catalog, and merge search results into one set;
- searches the NPS Union Catalog for users of other library catalogs with the parallel search capability via their native client interface;
- Voyager may be integrated with Endeavor's ImageServer, an electronic document management program with full multi-media capability and OCR optional module supporting automated indexing.

#### *The NPS Virtual Library*

The NPS Virtual Library Web site (working title) is envisioned as a first stop clearinghouse for discovering what information resources (excluding administrative data) are managed by the agency, regardless of format, scope, location, and subordinate body responsible for it. The Web site will provide direct links to NPS electronic resources served on the Internet or the NPS Intranet, but will not override any security measures implemented by the "owners" of the respective resources. The URL for the NPS Virtual Library Web site will be submitted to Internet search engine databases and other relevant Internet "hot lists" to enhance discovery of NPS information resources. A second goal of the NPS Virtual Library Web site is to maximize staff research time and achieve economies of scale by offering a centralized point of access to relevant electronic resources and information services (free and fee-based) external to the NPS. The implementation of the NPS Virtual Library will occur over a two-year phase-in period, beginning in summer of 1998, with limited access beginning in the fall of 1998. In addition to the Union Catalog, the NPS Virtual Library Web site may provide links to the following products and utilities, many of them through the Voyager front-end main toolbar:

- a GILS database (Government Information Locator Service), containing descriptions and selected hot links to NPS electronic and non-electronic resources: Web sites; publications; databases, e.g., GIS, natural and cultural resource data sets, directories of libraries, ProCite users, subject experts;
- a gateway to the Department of the Interior GILS and other GILS servers;
- thematic "pathfinders" linking a variety of NPS information formats managed by various program areas, e.g., African-American history, Civil War;
- centralized inter-library loan (for internal circulation only—professionally staffed NPS libraries may elect to lend their materials outside the organization);
- "Ask an NPS Librarian" reference service;
- "NPS Library Resource of the Month" feature;
- library management and ProCite guidelines, training materials, and other user aids for NPS staff;
- access to CARL Uncover, a public access database of current tables of contents for over 17,000 journals, searchable by subject, with some capability for fee-based document delivery;
- site-license access to DIALOG, a commercial service that provides abstracts and some full-text of thousands of journal articles, dissertations, conference papers, reports, and monographs, which are organized into hundreds of topical databases (e.g., GEOREF, BIOREF, American History & Life), now searchable via a Web interface;
- link to the IPL (Internet Public Library) which offers free reference service and access to hundreds of general and specialized reference sources on the Web (directories, atlases, encyclopedias).

#### *The NPS Library Program*

The NPS Library Program is funded by, and operates under, the auspices of the NPS Information & Telecommunications Center (ITC) in Washington, D.C. The NPS Library Program Coordinator position is supported by ITC, the Pacific-Great Basin System Support Office, and the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, where the position is duty-stationed. Working with the 10-member steering committee (professional NPS librarians) of the NPS Library Advisory Council, the Program Coordinator plans, develops, and implements program products and services.

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For more information about the NPS Library Program, or to request library assistance, contact Program Coordinator, Amalin Ferguson, via any of the following methods: voice at 415-556-0238, fax at 415-556-3540, cc:Mail under her name, Internet email at <amalin\_ferguson@nps.gov>, or post to #BB Inbox: Library Link via cc:Mail.